

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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SUBJECT: NUTRITION LOAN PACKAGE ANNOUNCEMENT

REF: MATTHEWS-GILLESPIE TELCON 4/20/78

1. EMBASSY IS CONCERNED THAT THE PROPOSED NUTRITIONAL LOAN MAY BE TURNED INTO A POLITICAL FOOTBALL UNDER THE RUBRIC OF "SUPPORT FOR SOMOZA." THE POSSIBILITY FOR THIS HAPPENING IS LIKELY TO BE ENHANCED IF THE FIRST STORY REGARDING THE LOAN IS BASED ON PARTIAL INFORMATION.

OUR EXPERIENCE IS THAT Q AND A AND "IF ASKED" METHODS ARE NOT APPROPRIATE FOR USE WITH NICARAGUAN MEDIA, WHICH ROUTINELY PRINT FIRST, REGARDLESS OF SOURCE OR INCOMPLETENESS OF INFORMATION, AND ASK QUESTIONS LATER, IF EVER. THE NET RESULT IS USUALLY DISTORTION OF USG ACTS AND MISINTERPRETATION OF OUR POLICY. EMBASSY EFFORTS TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT AFTER LOCAL OPINION HAS BEGUN TO FORM HAVE HAD ONLY LIMITED SUCCESS AND NEARLY ALWAYS RESULT IN EMBASSY ENDING UP ON DEFENSIVE. EMBASSY BELIEVES THE BEST POSSIBILITY FOR AMELIORATING PROBABLY ADVERSE REACTION FROM THE HIGHLY POLITICIZED ANTI-SOMOZA FORCES IS FOR THE EMBASSY TO HAVE THE FIRST WORD IN THE FORM OF A PRESS RELEASE WHICH POINTS OUT THE NEED OF THE TARGET GROUP AND DESCRIBES THE OTHER PROGRAMS IN THE PACKAGE.

2. THE EMBASSY PROPOSED RELEASE OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT WHICH IS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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READY IN SPANISH AND IS PROVIDED BELOW IN RETRANSLATION INTO ENGLISH:

QUOTE. THE AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS TO PROCEED WITH FOUR PROGRAMS DIRECTED TOWARD THE BENEFIT OF THE LEAST FAVORED AND POOREST SECTORS OF THE NICARAGUAN PROPULATION. THREE OF THESE PROGRAMS WILL BE IMPLEMENTED BY PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS. THE OTHER

PROGRAM, FOR NUTRITIONAL IMPROVEMENT, WILL BE ADMINISTERED BY THE INTERSECTORIAL COMMISSION FOR ALIMENTATION AND NUTRITION. THE FINANCING BY THE NORTH AMERICAN PEOPLE FOR THESE PROGRAMS CONSISTS OF GRANTS OF 476,000 DOLLARS AND A LOAN OF THREE MILLION DOLLARS.

ONE OF THE GRANTS WILL BE DESTINED FOR THE NICARAGUAN FOUNDATION FOR DEVELOPMENT (FUNDE) FOR ITS CURRENT PROJECT "COOPERATIVES FOR SMALL RURAL MERCHANTS" WHICH WILL ESTABLISH 15 COOPERATIVES FOR MERCHANTS, ARTISANS, AND SMALL HOME INDUSTRIES IN RURAL AREAS OF BETWEEN 2,000 AND 10,000 POPULATION.

THE OTHER GRANTS WILL BE FOR THE WISCONSIN-NICARAGUAN PARTNERS OF THE AMERICAS TO AID IN TWO PROJECTS. THE FIRST, CALLED "REGIONAL PROJECT OF EDUCATION BY RADIO", INCLUDES A REGIONAL RADIO SERVICE WHICH WILL EMPHASIZE HEALTH IMPROVEMENT, AGRICULTURAL TECHNIQUES, NUTRITION AND BASIC EDUCATION IN THE ZONES OF PUERTO CABEZAS AND WASPAM. THE OTHER WILL ASSIST THE "REGIONAL HEALTH PROJECT FOR THE EAST COAST" BY FINANCING REGIONAL HEALTH CENTERS IN 28 TOWNS WITH A POPULATION BELOW 1,000 RESIDENT AND WITH AN ESTIMATED ANNUAL FAMILY INCOME OF 75 DOLLARS.

THE PROGRAM FOR NUTRITIONAL IMPROVEMENT IS DESIGNED TO IMPROVE THE NUTRITION OF POOR NICARAGUANS ESPECIALLY IN RURAL AREAS. A MAJORITY OF CHILDREN IN RURAL AREAS UNDER FOUR YEARS OF AGE SUFFER FROM CALORIC MALNUTRITION, ALSO PREGNANT AND LACTATING MOTHERS HAVE VERY LOW NUTRITIONAL LEVELS, ESPECIALLY ANEMIA. THE NEW PROGRAM WILL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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INCLUDE NUTRITIONAL EDUCATION PILOT PROJECTS TO DEVELOP AND MARKET FORTIFIED FOOD PRODUCTS HIGH IN PROTEIN, AND SPECIAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR MOTHERS AND CHILDREN. THE PROGRAM WILL DEVELOP SYSTEMS TO TRAIN NUTRITIONAL PLANNERS; DESIGN OBSERVATION SYSTEMS TO DETERMINE TYPES OF MALNUTRITION AND POPULATION GROUPS WHICH ARE VICTIMS OF MALNUTRITION; PROGRAMS FOR VITAMIN SUPPLEMENT OF MEALS; PROGRAMS OF SUPPLEMENTAL FEEDING; IMPROVEMENT IN THE DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM OF FOOD ESPECIALLY FOR PERISHABLES; AND PROGRAMS OF STUDENT EDUCATION BY MEANS OF MASS COMMUNICATION FOR THE PURPOSE OF IMPROVED NUTRITIONAL PRACTICES. THE BENEFICIARIES OF THIS PROGRAM ARE APPROXIMATELY 330,000 PEOPLE, OF WHOM 92,400 ARE VERY HIGH NUTRITIONAL RISKS. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE MANDATE OF THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, THESE ARE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE TO BENEFIT THE POOREST PEOPLE OF NICARAGUA. END QUOTE.

3. SOME NICARAGUANS ALREADY ARE AWARE OF THE LOAN AND GRANTS FROM INFORMATION OBTAINED IN WASHINGTON, AND STORY COULD APPEAR AT ANY TIME. CONSEQUENTLY, WE WOULD APPRECIATE AUTHORIZATION TO ISSUE RELEASE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. WE WOULD, OF COURSE, INFORM GON PRIOR TO RELEASE TO LOCAL MEDIA.
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